

**Strategic Planning - Duty to Co-operate
Shepway District Council (SDC) and Network Rail (NR)
Note of meeting on 25 October 2016**

Present:



This meeting was held to discuss strategic planning issues in Shepway in connection with SDC's growth ambitions for Otterpool Park, and the opportunities for improvements to Westenhanger Station and future rail services.

Expression of Interest for Otterpool Park to DCLG

■ and ■ described the proposal for a new settlement of up to 12,000 homes in the area around Junction 11 to meet the longer term need for housing and jobs in the district. The Council submitted, in the spring of 2016, an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a new garden settlement, Otterpool Park, under the Government's Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities initiative. SDC is waiting for a ministerial announcement from DCLG which is expected soon.

SDC owns a significant proportion (about a quarter) of the area of search shown in the EOI which has significant potential benefits in terms of land value capture, delivery and future governance arrangements. The area of search also includes Folkestone Racecourse and adjoining land. The parent company of Arena Racing is a key partner.

■ explained the promoter / land owner side collaboration agreement and that technical and master planning work has now begun. She stressed the importance of Westenhanger station and a good rail service to the success of meeting sustainable transport objectives for the new town.

■ mentioned that at this stage a 20 to 30 year build out plan is envisaged starting from 2020.

The work carried out on the EOI is separate to the work that the Council has embarked on in terms of reviewing its Core Strategy Local Plan. Arrangements have been put in place within the Council that distinguishes between its role as landowner /promoter of Otterpool Park and its role as local planning authority (LPA).

Review of SDC's Core Strategy Local Plan

■ explained that SDC has commenced a partial review of its Core Strategy Local Plan on the basis that the latest data for objectively assessed housing need has significantly increased above that planned for in the existing Core Strategy. The Council will need to plan for additional housing growth to the end of the current plan period in 2026 and also new growth between 2026 and 2037 and beyond. To support the review, SDC has commissioned a strategic growth options paper that assesses the high level options across the district.

■ also gave an update on Highways England proposed lorry holding area at Stanford West. ■ noted NR's support for more freight to be moved by rail, and the capacity for an increase in freight transport.

Network Rail update

■ described NR's role as planning the railway of the future for both passenger and freight. Its biggest market is commuter journeys, but all other routes need to be considered too. ■ recognised the current problems with capacity on the Kent network due to insufficient train capacity. The Kent Route Study, which is expected to go out to consultation in Nov, will identify the need for new additional train capacity. It sets out 'choices for funders' and gives a strategic high level business case for a range of projects. The final Study will be released in April 2017. ■ and ■ agreed on the importance of progressing a Strategic Business Case for OP with NR and KCC colleagues ASAP in order to feed into the Kent Route Study.

The nature of funding for rail infrastructure is moving away from centralised DfT funding toward local funding sources, including LEP and developer contributions. DfT may meet a funding gap if necessary. The five year Control Period funding cycle no longer applies, replaced by a more flexible rolling programme for projects. This means a business case can be prepared at the right time for the project. SDC welcomed this, more flexible, approach.

DfT also has a New Stations Fund for stations that can be opened by 2020, while acknowledging the limited application this may have in Shepway.

South Eastern franchise

SDC has met with Southeastern trains, the Train Operating Company (TOC), to discuss current and potential future train services to Shepway stations. NR noted that refranchising for this network begins in Nov 2016. The call for Expressions of Interest will go out at the same time, with a list of bidders announced in early 2017. The ITT will go out in April 2017.

Westenhanger station – future improvements

Having a station at Westenhanger (as opposed to building a new station) is a considerable benefit in supporting growth at Otterpool Park. A case for improvements should be set out in a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). A case for an increased service will need to be supported by an assessment of where people will be travelling to. ■ flagged that NR's Sponsor Team can help prepare a SOBC and provide information on costs. SDC should consider preparing a SOBC asap to feed into NR's Control Period 6.

Parking: different options for parking and the scale of the station's catchment will need to be considered. NR noted that the TOC usually owns and operates station car parks and takes the revenue arising. Highways England may be able to help fund a Park and Ride if they feel it has potential to reduce traffic on the network.

Agreed next steps and actions

- SDC to respond to Kent Route Study consultation when launched
- SDC to respond to South Eastern franchise consultation
- SDC to contact ■ about liaising with the Sponsor Team to develop a SOBC

- NR to provide a list of components required for a SOBC and advice how best this can be progressed at pace
- SDC to meet with TOC franchise bidders in Jan/ Feb 2017 when the list is released.